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# United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report contains an account of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific during the period from July 2007 to June 2008.

The reporting period marked a turning point in the operation of the Centre as significant positive developments paved the way for its physical relocation to the region. On 20 July 2007, the United Nations and the Government of Nepal signed the host country agreement and a memorandum of understanding on the relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu.

At its sixty-second session, the General Assembly unanimously welcomed the relocation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu, and requested the Secretary-General to expedite the necessary preparations to enable the Centre to function effectively.

Working closely with the Government of Nepal, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and with the valuable assistance of the United Nations Development Programme in Nepal, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs was able to finalize in a smooth and timely manner the preparations necessary for the relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu, and for its inauguration scheduled to take place mid-August 2008.

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With the early retirement of the Director of the Centre, Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs assumed the responsibility for the Centre's daily operation and undertook vigorous resource mobilization efforts based on a new approach to the Centre's activities.

Acting upon requests and on the basis of positive feedback from Member States, the Centre also continued to promote disarmament and security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific region through the organization of conferences, including the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Sapporo, Japan; and the Joint Conference on Disarmament organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Republic of Korea, in Seoul.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/39 D, the Centre was established on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions that Member States and interested organizations made to that end. Therefore, the provision of voluntary financial contributions, in particular for core funding, is of crucial importance for the operation and activities of the Centre. Sporadic and insufficient core funding impacts directly on the sustainability and quality of activities and services provided by the Centre.

In this connection, the Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Government of Nepal, and to those States which have already contributed financially and in kind to the Centre, and would like to reiterate that it is of critical importance that Member States, especially those from the region, take full ownership of the Centre and provide support to its operation.

# I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/39 D, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific is mandated to provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other activities mutually agreed upon by the Member States of the Asia-Pacific region for the implementation of measures for peace and disarmament, through appropriate utilization of available resources. The Centre shall coordinate the implementation of regional activities of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Asia and the Pacific.

2. In accordance with resolution 42/39 D, the Centre was established on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions that Member States and interested organizations might make to that end.

3. In paragraphs 5 to 8 of resolution 62/52, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide the Centre with the necessary support, within existing resources, in carrying out its programme of activities; welcomed the signing of the host country agreement and the memorandum of understanding by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Permanent Representative of Nepal on 20 July 2007 for the relocation of the Regional Centre to Kathmandu; requested the Secretary-General to expedite the necessary preparations with a view to ensuring physical operation of the Centre from Kathmandu within six months to enable the Centre to function effectively; and requested him to report to the Assembly at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

4. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and covers the activities of the Centre during the period from July 2007 to June 2008. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the Regional Centre for the biennium 2006-2007 is contained in the annex.

# II. Relocation of the Centre

5. On 20 July 2007, the United Nations and the Government of Nepal signed the host country agreement and a memorandum of understanding on the relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu, which marked a breakthrough in the prolonged efforts to relocate the Centre to Nepal. Physical remoteness and insufficient voluntary contributions hampered the Centre's capability to carry out its mandate in an effective manner.

6. Therefore, the physical operation of the Centre from within the region would allow it to serve more effectively the needs of its constituency of 43 countries, in a vast and diverse region faced with an impressive array of security and disarmament-related issues. With the early retirement of the Director of the Centre in March 2008, the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs assumed responsibilities of the Centre's daily operation and engaged in intensive preparations for its relocation in order to ensure the continuity and smooth transition of the Centre's operation from New York to Kathmandu. New extrabudgetary project proposals to be carried out in the region were designed and vigorous resources mobilization efforts were undertaken, aimed at strengthening the Centre's capacity to enable it to carry out its mandate fully and effectively in the region.

### A. New project proposals

7. During the reporting period, three new project proposals were developed for the Centre: "Capacity-building of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific"; "Enhancing international and regional cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons in Asia and the Pacific"; and "Promoting increased participation in, and improved reporting to the United Nations transparency instruments in armaments in Asia and the Pacific". More substantive project proposals are being formulated for the Centre. These projects are aimed at enhancing the Centre's capacity to enable it to carry out effectively the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, and to expand the scope of its activities to become more responsive to the actual needs of the countries in the region.

### B. Informal consultation on the relocation of the Centre to Nepal

8. In March 2008, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, organized an informal consultation in New York with interested Member States, in particular those from the region, on the relocation of the Centre, which was attended by 41 Member States, both from and outside of the region. The Office briefed Member States on the progress made on the preparations for the relocation of the Centre, presented the aforementioned three project proposals for the Centre, and indicated the need for associate experts that may be provided by Member States that are in a position to do so.

9. During the consultation, which was chaired by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, several Member States speakers responded to appeal by the Office for Disarmament Affairs for voluntary financial contributions for the Centre, by informing of their Government's willingness to provide financial support.

### C. Progress made on the physical operation of the Centre from Nepal

10. During the reporting period, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the full support of and in close cooperation with the Government of Nepal and the United Nations Development Programme Country Office in Nepal, undertook intensive preparations in relation to the physical relocation of the Centre to Nepal. The inauguration of the Centre is scheduled to take place in Kathmandu, in mid-August 2008.

## III. Activities of the Centre

11. Acting upon requests and on the basis of the positive feedback received from Member States, the Centre continues to encourage regional and subregional dialogue aimed at promoting disarmament and security in the region, through organizing United Nations conferences and meetings on various disarmament and security-related issues.

12. During the reporting period, the Centre organized, despite the limited financial resources made available to it through voluntary contributions of Member States and

other interested organizations, several conferences and meetings, as described below.

## A. Nineteenth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues

13. From 27 to 29 August 2007, the Centre organized, in Sapporo, Japan, in cooperation with the Government of Japan and the city of Sapporo and Hokkaido Prefecture, the nineteenth annual United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, on the theme "A new vision and required leadership towards a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction". Approximately 50 participants from Governments, academic institutions, the media, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in the Conference. Issues addressed at the Conference included the revitalization of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the balanced implementation of its three pillars: a new vision towards a world free from nuclear weapons; ways to prevent and respond to nuclear terrorism and the nuclear black market; and the implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Specific regional topics in relation to nuclear testing and nuclear proliferation were also discussed at the Conference.

14. The Conference provided a forum for frank and open discussions of critical issues in the field of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and regional security, highlighting, among a number of ideas, that the issue of nuclear weapons needs to be brought into the foreground of human awareness; that the positive outcome achieved at the first session of the Preparatory Committee provides States parties with a good foundation on which to build towards a successful 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; that the Conference on Disarmament should set an example for "bold nuclear disarmament initiatives" and immediately commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; that the realization of complete nuclear disarmament is a process requiring systematic, gradual and concrete steps and a sound and stable international security environment; and that international and regional cooperation is essential to address the threat arising from nuclear terrorism and to prevent non-State actors from acquiring nuclear weapons and related material.

## B. Sixth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues

15. In December 2007, the Centre organized, jointly with the Government of the Republic of Korea, the sixth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues on the theme "Towards the fulfilment of disarmament and non-proliferation in the twenty-first century: review of the current challenges", in Seoul.

16. Approximately 40 participants from Governments, academic and research institutions and international and regional organizations, mainly from the Asia-Pacific region, attended the Conference. The Conference dealt with four major issues, namely, the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; disarmament and the non-proliferation machinery; threats posed by missile proliferation; and regional efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation. The Conference provided an informal

forum to stimulate regional dialogue on pressing disarmament and security issues. The Conference assisted Member States in preparing for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. As in previous conferences, it also provided the opportunity to discuss, in a multilateral environment, issues related to missiles, including missile proliferation.

## C. Cooperation with regional and intergovernmental organizations and other relevant actors

17. The Centre maintained cooperation with regional and other intergovernmental organizations, including the Pacific Island Forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as with academic institutions and NGOs in the Asia and the Pacific region by inviting them to participate in meetings organized by the Centre on security and disarmament issues. The Centre continued to exchange information and interact with these organizations/institutions.

18. With respect to disarmament and non-proliferation education, in the course of 2007 the Centre held informal consultations with ASEAN member States, Central Asian States and South Pacific States to explore the possibility of jointly organizing regional workshops focusing on fostering capacity-building for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

19. During the reporting period, the Centre invited disarmament-related international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, to make presentations at conferences and meetings that it organized, with a view to promoting the universality and full implementation of disarmament-related treaties in the region.

20. In the period under review, the Centre and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) maintained cooperation. The Centre was invited to make a presentation on nuclear non-proliferation issues at the sixth meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in Jakarta from 8 to 10 December 2007.

21. The Centre provided substantive advice and technical assistance to the prefecture and city of Nagasaki, Japan, in respect of the organization of the fifteenth United Nations and Disarmament Symposium, on the theme "A world free from nuclear weapons". The Symposium was held in Nagasaki on 31 August 2007, and offered local leaders, academic institutions and the general public in Japan the opportunity to familiarize themselves with current international nuclear disarmament efforts and the related challenges.

# IV. Staffing and financing

22. During the reporting period, major changes took place with respect to the staffing situation of the Centre. Subsequent to the retirement of the Director of the Centre in March 2008, the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for

Disarmament Affairs assumed the responsibility for the Centre's daily operation, including all aspects of preparation for the relocation of the Centre to Nepal, such as the recruitment of a new director and undertaking intensive resources mobilization efforts to support the staffing and financial needs of the Centre. The recruitment of the new director is under way and should be finalized shortly. Responding to the appeal by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for financial support, a generous contribution from the Government of Switzerland allowed the Centre to employ its Special Coordinator for Peace and Disarmament Programmes in Asia and the Pacific as of 1 July 2008. In the same vein, the Government of the Netherlands has generously agreed to sponsor one Associate Expert for the Centre, who is expected to join in October. The host country, Nepal, has made timely financial contributions to the Centre, in accordance with the host country agreement and the memorandum of understanding signed between the United Nations and the Government of Nepal, which provided funds to support four local staff members (one administrative assistant, one driver and two security staff).

23. In order for the Centre to carry out its mandate effectively, it is essential for the Centre to rely on a dependable team of professional and support staff. This will determine its efficiency and ability to respond to requests from Member States in a meaningful and timely manner. The support of Member States to the Centre is therefore of vital importance to enable it to carry out outreach activities proactively and to develop and implement concrete projects tailored to suit the specificities of various subregions. In this connection, unearmarked financial contributions from Member States to strengthen the Centre's capacity are critical.

24. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions in the amount of $194,726 were received. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Korea and Thailand, for their contributions. The Secretary-General commends the Government of Nepal, as the host country, for the timely provision of its financial contributions, in accordance with the host country agreement and the memorandum of understanding, that supported the relocation and physical operation of the Centre from Kathmandu. This annual financial contribution by the host country is essential to ensure the sustainability of the operation of the Centre. The Secretary-General also wishes to thank the Governments of the Netherlands and Switzerland and for their generous contributions in kind to the Centre.

25. Past experience shows that voluntary contributions to sustain the operation of the Centre are not sufficient. The Centre urgently needs more core funding for its staffing and operations. Therefore Member States may wish to consider alternative means of ensuring stable core funding for the Centre to allow it to sustain its work and be in a position to respond to the increasingly diversified and numerous requests for technical assistance received from countries of the region.

## V. Conclusions

26. The relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu, marks a turning point for the Centre's operation and activities. Within the limits of its capacity and pursuant to its mandate, the Centre continues to implement its mandate in promoting regional and subregional dialogue on global and regional disarmament and security issues, as well as to serve as an instrument for fostering a climate of confidence-building and

cooperation in disarmament-related issues in the region. Support, especially financial support, from Member States, will enable the Centre to respond effectively to the needs of the 43 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, in respect of security and disarmament-related issues.

27. In cementing its partnership with States in the Asia-Pacific region and other stakeholders, the Centre will be the primary United Nations regional entity advocating the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. This goal can only be achieved through the indispensable support by Member States. Besides political support, voluntary contributions from Member States and interested organizations, which represent the sole financial resources of the Centre, are essential to ensuring its operational sustainability and to effective fulfilment of its mandate. The Secretary-General reiterates his appeal to Member States, in particular those of the Asia-Pacific region, to continue to provide and increase financial support, in particular core funding, to the Centre in support of its programmes and activities, at this critical time of its physical relocation to the region.

# Annex

## Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for the biennium 2006-2007

| | *United States dollars* |
|---|---|
| I. Fund balance, 31 December 2005 | 159 700 |
| II. Income, 1 January 2006-31 December 2007 | |
| Voluntary contributions[a] | 236 296 |
| Interest income | 17 171 |
| Other/miscellaneous income | — |
| **Subtotal** | **413 167** |
| III. Expenditures | |
| 1 January 2006-31 December 2007 | 99 896 |
| Programme support | 13 535 |
| **Subtotal** | **113 431** |
| IV. Fund balance, 31 December 2007 | 299 736 |

*Note*: This information is based on the statement of income and expenditure for the biennium 2006-2007 ending 31 December 2007. During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2008, additional contributions totalling $306,838 were received from Austria ($154,760), China ($20,000), Indonesia ($9,982), Nepal ($54,153), Pakistan ($4,943), Thailand ($3,000) and Turkey ($60,000).

[a] 2006: China ($10,000), Kazakhstan ($20,000), Pakistan ($5,870) and Thailand ($3,000). 2007: Kazakhstan ($10,000), Nepal ($159,426), Pakistan ($5,000), Republic of Korea ($20,000) and Thailand ($3,000).